

Smelt Update

Thursday – January 8, 2009

Conditions:

There were some indications that a “pilot run” had made its way into the Columbia River in late December. These early smelt might have made it as far as the Cowlitz River, based on an unconfirmed report of smelt in the stomach of sturgeon being caught at the mouth of the Cowlitz River last week.

No test dip was done by WDFW this week due to the record-breaking floods throughout Western Washington. The flow at Castle Rock is at 102,000 cfs (2.3 times the highest flow recorded by USGS for this date). Turbidity is extremely high (exceeding 1,500 FNU in the past 24 hours). On the bright side, water temperature is at 46°F (8.0°C) in the Cowlitz River and 43°F (5.9°C) in the Columbia River. Smelt prefer water of at least 40°F or warmer.

Overall the sport fishing prospects for this coming weekend look bleak. The floodwaters are expected to recede; however, river conditions are likely to remain dangerous to fishers. Access will be a problem, and some popular sites for dipping are unreachable or washed away.

Catches:

Columbia River:

Sport: There were no reports of smelt being dipped by sport fishers this season.

Commercial: No commercial landings were reported for December 2008.
No commercial landings reported since January 1st. A third-hand report indicates that a few pounds might have been landed in the estuary on Monday, January 5th.

Cowlitz River:

Sport: There were no reports of sport fishers on Saturday, January 3rd.

Commercial: No commercial landings reported for January 4th and 7th.
0-lbs cumulative since January 3rd.

Sport Seasons/Regulations:

Tributaries - Sport dipping is only allowed on the Cowlitz River, from 6 AM to 10 PM Saturdays through March 31st. The daily limit is 10 lbs per person per day. This is equivalent to ¼ of a 5-gallon bucket.

Mainstem Columbia River daily limit is 25 lbs per person per day and the fishery is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Commercial Seasons:

Columbia River: 7-hour fishing periods on Mondays and Thursdays.

Cowlitz River: 6-hour fishing periods on Sunday and Wednesday nights.

Fishing Rule updates are also available by calling (360) 696-6211, then press *1010

Here are some web sites that provide daily river data:

Cowlitz River water flow and levels: USGS Web site:

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=14243000&PARAMeter_cd=00060.00065

Columbia River estuary water temperature: CORIE Web site:

<http://www.ccalmr.ogi.edu/CORIE/network/woody/>